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BRIEF STATEMENT OF CIA PUBLICITY POLICY

1. In a government agency, a good public relations policy calls for:

a. Favorable mention in publicity media to the end of presenting the aspirations and achievements of the agency in such a way that it will gain public and Congressional approval.

b. Good relations with representatives of publicity media through cooperativeness on the part of the agency, inviting cooperativeness on the part of the media.

2. These should also be the aims of the Central Intelligence Agency, but CIA is limited with respect to such aims by:

a. Laws which provide that CIA may (exceptions to the usual open dealings required of the Government) and shall (protection of sources and methods) operate in secrecy.

b. The exigencies of intelligence work which dictate that secrecy must always be preserved or preservable.

c. The fact that CIA has no control whatever over the press or any other publicity medium, so that its only protection against misuse of information about itself lies in its own refusal to elicit information

d. The fact that CIA cannot trust publicity media not to misuse information no matter of what security implications, not because the media are untrustworthy, but because their business is to make public without exception whatever they consider to have news or entertainment value.

3. For these reasons, CIA is denied the luxury of fully cooperative relations with publicity media. It must either refuse to cooperate at all or must adopt some form of compromise policy.

4. There are serious limitations on a compromise policy in that:

a. The press and public, having been led to believe that the security of "sensitive" agencies like CIA is sacrosanct, are literally shocked when they see what appear to be revelations about CIA in print.

b. Each such revelation (invariably believed to have been fostered by CIA) weakens the faith of the press and public in the genuineness of CIA's demands for special treatment in security matters.

c. So far as the media are concerned, any revelation about CIA will be eagerly taken up as a precedent to justify demands for further revelations

d. Under pressure from such precedents, CIA might find itself ultimately in a position where it would either have to release information that should not be made public, or become vulnerable to accusations of censorship and interference with freedom of the press.

5. Because CIA cannot be completely cooperative or even adopt a compromise policy aimed at ~~approximately~~ approximating complete cooperation, CIA will always be forced to adopt non-cooperation as its standard. This absolute standard can then be tempered to a degree, depending upon discretion ~~and~~ in individual cases and the wisdom of current situations.

6. Such a policy is now in effect in CIA. It has worked surprisingly well for five years. Under this policy:

a. CIA has no public relations officer or office: matters having to do with public relations are directed to the office of the Assistant to the Director.

b. Normally, CIA replies to press inquiries with "No comment" whose principal virtue is that it avoids the risk of confirmation through denial

c. CIA declines to have itself associated publicly with newspaper stories, books, television serials, and the like.

d. CIA will examine scripts offered to it and form a judgment

as to their implications for the national security; but only on agreement that this service will not be divulged and that no attribution to CIA will be made.

e. CIA gives assistance and guidance to media representatives under selected circumstances approved by the Director.

f. CIA is thus able to keep up satisfactory enough relations with key media representatives to be able to expect favorable treatment in return.

7. To go any further than this—in particular to go to any length at all in emulating the publicity policies of the FBI and the military services—would be to risk grave consequences. Principal among these would be:

a. Loss of public confidence in an allegedly "hush-hush" agency which seemed to permit itself to become identified with cheap publicity

b. Loss of Congressional confidence, with the possibility of Congressional reprisals

c. Loss of confidence among CIA employees, many of whom feel offended and betrayed each time they see public mention of matters they have personally striven to protect

d. Loss of confidence abroad on grounds that an FBI type of publicity-conscious intelligence organization must be too unsophisticated to be taken seriously.

e. Risk of a serious security breach, originating from well-meant release of supposedly "favorable" publicity.

8. The case of the proposed NBC television serial is one in point. Whether or not CIA allowed the proposed attribution to CIA in these films to be considered official, such an attribution would be so considered. The occasion would be taken by all other television interests and by public relations media

in general to constitute a sufficient precedent for any new demands on CIA that they chose to make. The successful CIA public relations policy just described would become impossible to maintain. It would be difficult if not impossible to prevent CIA from becoming just another government agency in publicity matters. All risks enumerated in paragraph 7 would then have to be assumed, along with all the implied possibilities of disaster.